

## Thus spake Saint Vādirāja - III

The 13<sup>th</sup> Verse of this pilgrim guide chapter I deserves to be specially noted. Tradition reports that this was composed by the saint in his dream as a result of the special Grace of his favourite deity Hayavadana. (This God was also constantly prayed to by Vedānta Deshika, the greatest saint among the Vaiṣṇavites after Śrī Rāmanuja bhagavatpāda). The Verse itself is: (तीर्थप्रबन्ध I. 13).

रूप्यात्मकामरपुरस्सर साग्निरुप  
रूप्यात्मकं न भवतः कृपयागतस्य ।  
रूप्यात्मकालय कृतलय तत्त्वमेव  
रूप्यात्मनो गतिरिहापि तदीश पाहि ॥

All the four lines here start with रूप्यात्मक, of course in different contexts. (Such alliterations of group letters give rise to a special शब्दालंकार or figure of speech relating to letters named यमक in Sanskrit Alamkāraśāstra. Compare Dandin's Kāvyaadarsha अकृतावर्णस्तवकं स्तवकं द्वादश कवैः यमकं प्रथमाधुर्वमाधुर्वमप्यसौ विदुः ॥

In this Verse, the group-letter alliteration स्तवकं in the end of the first half of the first line and माधुर्य at the end of the first half of the second line is noteworthy. Such alliterations, Bhaṇṇahe declares, are उत्सवः कुक्षियामेव, or feast to the highly learned alone). The Verse of Vādirāja may be translated thus:



Lord, who is the foremost of the Gods who can be metaphorically identified with the best as standard of comparison (roopa), who is to be described by the good, who has out of His infinite mercy come to Roopyapeetha (or Udipi) and whose abode in Vaikuntha enables the individual souls deserving Mukti to enjoy intrinsic divine bliss attaining a form (roopa) similar to Him, protect <sup>me as you are who gets mukta</sup> me, as you are declared to be the goal of every created being. paramaa gathi (in the Vishnu Sahasranama).

As regards the next verse which pays homage to the Ananteshwara Temple in Udipi (which existed along with Chandramanleshwara temple prior to Madhwa where Vishnu sleeping on the couch of Adi Shesha appears as sleeping on the couch of Rudra, we have to note that it teaches us that Rudra is apprenticing himself to be the future Shesha; This clearly shows how the saint teaches subtle Maadwa principles through the clever medium of traditions. A Brahmin was, we are told by tradition, practising penance for the birth of a son. One night, Lord Anantaasana, manifesting Himself on Adishesha in a dream, assured him that his desire would be fulfilled if he went to Roopyapeetha about 4 miles away and perform milk abhishekta to the Naaga peetha which happened to be a sacrificial altar in a sacrifice performed recently. The Lord also informed him that He would Himself reside there in the shape of a Linga. The overjoyed Brahmin did as directed and so Parashurama Himself appeared as a Linga at once. The temple though referred to as Ananteshwara is actually the Supreme Hari lying on the bed of Adishesha. Many are the spiritual benefits conferred on the devotee who goes on pilgrimage; a bath in the Nethramath river rids one of the diseases of the eye; the rolling of one's body over the uchchishkta or cast off remnants



after the Brahmins have partaken of their food in subrah-  
manya cures one of leprosy and washes away the sin of  
killing a Brahmin (other Mahaapaatakas also as setting  
fire to another's house etc). Vatiraja's ingenuity in  
interpreting Shastraic tenets in the light of local traditions  
is seen in the Shamkara and Narayana Lingas which  
happen to be installed side by side in a village which  
gets its name from both these deities near Coondapoor in  
South Kanara). Shamkara's Linga always remains lean  
in spite of the fact that large quantities of food are  
used in its worship by the local priests; Vishnu's Linga  
keeps on growing though the food used for worship there  
is far smaller in quantity. The saint is reminded of the  
famous Vedic hymn - dvaa suparna - according to  
which among the two birds dwelling on the same tree,  
the human bird, partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree,  
becomes leaner while the divine bird, not eating any  
fruit at all, shines all the more (52<sup>nd</sup> verse in chapter I  
reads thus: दा सुपर्णेति वेदोऽस्ते तो प्रायशोऽमरौ ।  
यदेकोऽश्नति बहुशोऽनश्ननोऽभिवर्धते ॥ )

Thus Hari and Hara must be clearly different (61<sup>st</sup>  
verse); if they are to be the same, the enemy whom they  
two together won, ought to have been Kichripus - हे वरं-हेतु  
इत्युक्तं नितम् (the relentless logic of the mature युक्तिमयि is formidable)

The sparkling humour of the saint is beau-  
tifully reflected in Verse 47 (chapter I) where footless  
Kaatyaayani - the fierce aspect of Parvati - is herself  
compared to a ball <sup>supra</sup>rolling up and down quickly, so agile  
or active is the lady who sometimes moves on the earth,  
quickly ascending into the atmosphere, while destroying her  
enemy in battle. Let us hear the saint's own words:

कतिपयैवोपरितरन्ती नमः स्थलं यपि गृह्णन्ती ।  
विपक्षवैवंसविद्धो मुरन्ती कात्यायनी कन्दुकवद्विभीति ॥  
Anybody can easily recognise the quickness of the  
movements of this Goddess in the quickly moving  
words of the sloka. The Goddess in Kollooru is enshrined



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in Kolloore or Mookambikaa Kshetra and tradition also associates the great Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada with this place. The saint's ability to compose Verses on the spot (when offered the last line and challenged immediately to supply the other 3 lines which he promptly did) in an assembly of learned Pandits is exhibited here.

Sri Maadhava in his Taatpariya Nornaya  $\overline{xx} \times \overline{11-15+16}$  Verses makes his followers, the Gopas leave for Prabhara Kshetra (described in Verse 88 chapter I here) so that they might at least die in a holy place (though the place where they were also living so far was equally holy).

पुण्य क्षेत्रे ऽपि न मृतिः स्वर्गहे ऽवधिधर्मदा ।

गत्वा वाक्यमपि क्षेत्रं स्यान्महत्फलमित्यज ॥

प्रकाशयितुमिवैतान्प्रभासाय कुशरचक्रान् ।

नीत्वा दानानि सद्धर्मनि तैरकारयद्वक्तुतः ॥

This emphasis on the efficacy of their visit to Prabhara Kshetra especially at the time of their death, one can clearly understand, must have been working in this Saint's (Vaidicaja's) mind and must have been responsible for making him offer his worship at all pilgrim centres in India. It might also be noted that the second chapter dealing with Prayaga Maadhava at Triveni Sangama refers to it as तीर्थराज or king of all pilgrim centres. The saint refers to this holy place as Aghashkreenee Kripasaree, as a sword cutting the large volume of sins and Muktikaarinee or conferring the boon of Mukti on those who worship there. It is particularly prayed to to burn away all sins exactly as the sun melts away and destroys big icebergs - मम अनिष्टं तं आदृष्टात् हिमती अंशुमानिव. (verse 13). This King of pilgrim centres is referred to as तीर्थराजो जयति प्रयागः in various Puranas and we are asked to worship it mentally



at least every day wherever we take our bath -

तीर्थराजाय नमः, त्वं राजा सर्वतीर्थानां त्वमेव जगतः पिता

याचितं तीर्थं मे देहि सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते ॥

The Shyama Vata or the Banian Tree is referred to as conferring all boons on the devotees who worship there. Kalidasa refers to the way in which Sita, when she started on her exile, prayed to this tree (Raghuvamsha).

तया पुरस्तादुपयाचितो यः सोऽयं वटः श्याम इति प्रतीयते. Valmiki also had referred to this tradition earlier in his Epic:

न्यग्रोधं तमुपस्थाय वैदेही वाक्यमब्रवीत् ।  
नमस्तेऽस्तु महावृक्ष पालयेन्मे व्रतं पतिः ॥

In this very context after describing the artistic conning of the waters of the white Ganga and black Yamuna in verses which are deemed among the best in Sanskrit literature, the Prince of Poets declares that <sup>the</sup> efficacy of a bath at the spot is so great that even without a knowledge of the religious principles (which are insisted upon by every Acharya for attaining Mukti), the illiterate even will be freed from the bondage of Samsara or cycle of birth and death.

तत्त्वावबोधेन विनाऽपि येषां तनुयजां नास्ति शरीरवन्धः ।  
Here again one is reminded of the ingenuity of our ancestors in locating our best pilgrim centres in places where Nature has lavished her bounty in the artistic scenery. Both the mind and the eye get the needed spiritual solace which alone confers everlasting bliss.

समुद्रपत्न्योर्जकसन्निपाते कृतात्मनां इव किलाभिषेकात् ।  
The saint lived and loved the agricultural districts of South and North Kanara where he spent the major part of his life. The ploughing of the fields yielded a very rich harvest and produced an <sup>indelible</sup> impression on his mind. Towards the

end of his UTTARA PRABANDHA, in verse 38 while describing the Kurukshetra, he declares artistically:

श्रीभीमसैनकरकजगदाप्रहरे:

यूगीकृताश्वगजपत्निमृदुग्रपिण्डम् ।

उत्पातपार्थशरसद्यपदं कुम्भनाम्

क्षेत्रं दिशासु विततान सुकीर्तिधन्यम् ॥

Bhima ploughs the field with his mace-plough; the enemy's horse, elephants and foot-soldiers form the mud in the field (they are all destroyed), Arjuna's arrows are planted in the Kurukshetra and lo! the result is the harvest of the fame of their Victory! What a magnificent metaphor this is, every reader can easily realise for himself. Sri Madhva in his Tatparjanya Niraya had declared - विस्तारे भीमनिहताः संक्षेपेऽर्जुनपतिताः and this clearly testifies to the truth of the Puranic dictum - श्रीभीमहरो प्रधानाङ्गं हि मारुतिः that Bhima, who incarnated later as Madhva was the person who faithfully carried out the behests of Shikhishe. It was because of Bhima that Krishna had befriended Arjuna in this Avatara while in the previous incarnation, Sri Rama had become the friend of Sugriva just because of Hanuman; Madhva in his Tatparjanya Niraya V 46 had clearly explained this riddle: देहेऽपि यत्र पवनोऽत्र हरिः यतोऽसौ तत्रैव वायुरिति वेदवक्त्रिभिः कोऽस्मिन्ब्रह्मत्वेति तथैव सोऽवतारे तस्मात्स मारुतिकृते रविर्ज एव स कृष्णतनु रज्जुनामय रश्मिमात्रमेव तदरिः श्विजं पूर्वं हि मारुतिमवाप्स रेः सुतोऽयं तेनाऽस्म वल्लिनमहन्

faithfully adhering to the principles of philosophy as taught by his guru Madhva, Vadiraja has composed his Pilgrim Guide which can also serve as a faithful introduction to the study of Madhva's Philosophy.

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